

KARO-ECHO Membership Meeting

October 14, 2019

Arlington Clubhouse

Attendees

Call Sign	Name
NI6A	Don Simon
KJ6AAT	David Swanson
KE6BEE	Howdy Goudey
KN6BUY	Tom Fattaruso
KN6CMP	Blake Yeaman
KN6CMR	Susan Yeaman
KM6CXI	Mike Stuart
KK6GIO	Larry Vanselow
K6KOP	Jerry Michaels
KK6NDF	Hal Graboske
KC2OKI	Jon "Hammond" Heda
KM6PGC KN6DXD	Patrick Lee
KK6PPR	Davis Todhunter
KM6UBY	Edward Carney
K6RJM	Rob McNicholas
KJ6SWK	Annette McCoubrey
KM6UCF	Natalie DeJarlais
KJ6WSS	Jay Fenton
KK6ZPM	Karen Leong Fenton
	Larry Nagel
KE6ZWT	Lowell Detloff

October 26 SET

Howdy will be leading the SET on Saturday, 10/26 and asked for input on activities of interest. He also circulated a signup sheet, and clarified that it's fine to participate for a portion of the SET if one's availability is limited.

The first SET in September 2018 was oriented around a CERT activity in EC9 and funnelling radio traffic from the neighborhood (via GMRS/FRS) through the hams to EOC. The focus was on neighborhood mutual aid and getting messages to EOC at El Cerrito City Hall. The second SET in February 2019 was focused on radio communication, with 20 operators participating. In a realistic scenario, neighborhoods may be on their own for awhile, because the EOC will take a while to set up. Also first responders will most likely be overwhelmed and therefore too preoccupied to be of timely assistance.

SETS to date have required a lot of preparation with pre-written messages that are handed to operators who know where they will be routed, at prescribed times. We use a modified form of the ICS 213. Messages range from status messages that don't need to be passed along to more urgent communications.

Howdy hopes that the next SET will include a mixture of all these things: some formal messages, some mutual aid requests, neighborhood-to-neighborhood support that bypasses the EOC, etc. It takes significant effort to create messages and set the timing, and it takes away from the spontaneity and realistic nature of getting on the air. Howdy would like to see more real-time improvisation, with people generating their own messages and timing them in a realistic way. It would be less polite and more hectic and chaotic, which would be appropriate. It's net control's job to keep chaos at bay, but it would be good for operators to break in and have the net control handle it to practice handling more realistic communications.

One idea is to assign some people to incident command posts, and have other people be more mobile and be redeployed during the three hours of the SET.

Karen mentioned that we could use the next two Thursday nets to prepare, including more signal testing based on location. On Thursdays, we try a number of things: mapping, changing frequencies, relays, etc. Usually antennas are the issue, but there are also a lot of terrain issues. Much of the realism of the test is having to act as relays and face the issue of the inability to communicate. It's good to know your equipment and its capabilities/limitations, and to try other locations on Thursdays with different equipment.

Frequency switching is important to free up the net frequency. Net control does the pairing off to other frequencies. It's always important to check to see whether a frequency is in use.

Rob will involve his local GMRS folks. Howdy likes the idea of interfacing with the community/neighborhood -- even if they only observe or do a CERT-like activity.

Hal mentioned that we want area coordinators involved in the SET, and is in touch with Hilliard, who will recruit organizers. Howdy mentioned that he would love to see this, but that it adds a layer of complexity; perhaps each person representing an area (a CERT IC) will need to assemble whatever level of activity they want around them. The same person (area IC) shouldn't serve as both a ham operator *and* an area coordinator. We need to find hams for each area, as well as CERT area coordinators where that role is currently unfilled. Each transmission point (site) should fill a minimum of four roles: ham radio operator, GMRS radio operator, message center manager, and the CERT incident commander.

In the drill on the 26th, Howdy will decide where the ICP staging areas will be. Rob and Mike already have designated ICPs in their areas (Tassajara and Cerrito Vista Parks), so those are set and we can just assign hams to those sites.

There is a portable station/go kart available for a SET volunteer who doesn't have a portable system.

Jay mentioned that having gone through this exercise twice, trying to redeploy and fill the voids, prompted the creation of a colored CERT chart. He started plugging people in as they called in. A larger, laminated map could be helpful. He passed around an octopus chart showing Richmond areas that can communicate with each other.

Howdy suggested that people collect data that might be useful later -- such as who's checking in with their locations. You learn to recognize certain people and it makes it easier over time. It also helps you to be more interactive with the group. During a SET, there are lulls when you're not transmitting and it can be good to track what's going on. Hal points out that there must be a scribe to help keep things sorted.

Rob pointed out that the GMRS/FRS folks made last year's SET realistic and that they were excited about the exercise. GMRS/FRS frequencies are on the KE website.

Request for additional net control volunteers

A number of people serve as net control in rotation on Thursdays, and Howdy would like to hand off that responsibility and give other people turns. Let Howdy know if you're interested, as he would like to broaden participation in that role. Location doesn't matter as long as you have decent communication with most of the hams.

Clubhouse Progress

We have a GMRS antenna on the Tassajara clubhouse in EC9, with an external patch box. Anyone is welcome to go there on a Thursday to check it out for the net. There is a similar box at Harding for a dual band Ham antenna; though no GMRS there. We're trying to get more antennas installed at more park locations.

Rob is interested in an antenna for Cerrito Vista park. Howdy mentioned that it's a slow process to get this done, but he has found his way through the bureaucracy. He'll work on getting more of these, but there's also the funding issue. There are three funding options: do it ourselves; go through the fire dept; or attempt to get CERT funding.

Membership Roster Updating

Public membership roster needs to be updated by Rob.

16 Nov LUTB All Contra Costa County CERT Communications drill

Hal, Dave, and Don have been discussing whether to participate. Richmond CERT has officially decided to participate. El Cerrito/Kensington CERT's official participation is uncertain.

Light Up the Bay (LUTB) organizers would like El Cerrito/Kensington CERT to send hams to each ICP, as well as an AC, a GMRS operator, and a scribe. Because GMRS messages emanating from the blocks might be irrelevant and chaotic, it is up to the message center manager at the CERT area CP level to triage the messages as to clarity, brevity, and relevance -- streamlining them before they are sent to the city EOC. LUTB folk suggest using search & rescue signs sprinkled through each neighborhood with information about various damages and needs. Ideally there might be three triaged messages from each ICP that is sent to the COC. We don't know how many ICPs we'll have. If we don't have enough ICPs to provide ACs and CERT GMRS/FRS operators, it probably won't be worth KAROECHO's participation.

In every CERT area in Contra Costa County, ICPs will filter these messages and send them to the city EOCs via ham radio. It is the responsibility of the message center manager at the CERT area CPs to do so. This would be an excellent opportunity to train CERT volunteers as message center managers, scribes, and GMRS operators. During an actual disaster

after the city EOC is formally activated, the official message center manager (non-ham) who is assigned by the City IC (Incident Commander) runs the message center as the authority as to how the incoming messages are routed because the incident commander will be busy elsewhere. Therefore some messages may go on to the county via ham radio; others may be tossed. We might have Chief Janes acting as the filter (city message center authority hopefully), who will go on to County OES in Martinez. Logjams can be expected to occur along the way, given that a plethora of messages are going to the county from all the major Contra Costa County cities on one or two frequencies. County OES is asking for the messages to be sent via fldigi/flmsg MT 2000 L via the W6CX 220 MHz repeater.

The EOC in our area has only one antenna and therefore is limited to only one frequency at a time. They'll use digital communication on 220 or they'll use voice on a repeater system, but either will be overloaded, so Don doesn't forecast a positive outcome as the LUTB SET has this and many other built-in flaws. There will be another LUTB meeting on Thursday, October 17. Don distributed a diagram of the LUTB "Communication Layers," showing communications going from Field Teams, to ICPs, to Local Government, and then to the County EOC, which LUTB plans to utilize..

Mike suggested that we scale down and just have one area. Don thought it might be a good idea if we can get enough participation.

Hal said; that LUTB has 8 participating cities (Martinez, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek, Lamorinda, San Ramon, Richmond, etc.) that are larger than us. They have funding. We're small potatoes, and it's interesting to sit in with these folks and learn from them. Bottom line: if radio people don't push this, it won't happen in El Cerrito/Kensington. Getting CERT involved in El Cerrito and Kensington is off CERT's radar here; but LUTB is requesting us to participate. Chief Grupalo, EC/KEN CERT manager, has admitted that local CERT is a "catch and release" program; *i.e.*, they train people and let them go. Don said that El Cerrito/Kensington deserved better and stated that it is a much easier task than implementing an operational CERT Community Response team in a smaller area.

Outreach and recruiting

Hilliard sent out a survey that got almost 300 replies. Of the 300 replies, 107 said they'd be interested to learn about radio. We need to follow up on that.

FCC database - Hal will reach out to the 11 current FCC hams in his area. Every CERT area has hams, and Rob offered to plot them via Google maps. Responses from the KARO-ECHO letter have begun to trickle in, with three new signups. David goes to the CERT graduation drills and has people sign up for radio communications. That's the last chance you have to get their information. You get a handful of people each time.

We should assign someone to present to the CERT graduation, per David's suggestion. It's good to hand out flyers; Annette has been doing this. Don likes the idea of going to the last class (before the graduation) when everyone is in one room, and it's convenient to pass around a signup sheet and provide a flyer. This is what David did last night - they spoke for 5 minutes at the end of the class. It was a good time to grab them. So far El Cerrito CERT has not granted us any time.

Other Issues

For information on the repeater, see the latest newsletter.

Janes has been designated by Grupalo to be the official KARO-ECHO liaison with Emergency Services. We need more people to be able to access the EOC, and Hal is arranging for EOC training and ID cards. Larry, Rob, Annette, Howdy, and Natalie volunteered to attend the training.

Hal requested a volunteer to take minutes at the November 11 meeting, without success.